swiss clinical trial organisation

ecrin

FAQ

ECRIN – European Clinical Research Infrastructure Network

What is ECRIN, and how is it organised?

ECRIN is a European, non-profit research infrastructure dedicated to supporting multinational clinical studies.

It operates through a distributed network of 13 member countries, linking more than 130 specialised Clinical Trial Units, CTUs, across Europe. Each country is represented by a national node with designated staff, called a European Correspondents, or “EuCos”. The EuCos are the main contact point at national level and coordinate service delivery nationally. They are managed centrally by ECRIN, who is headquartered in Paris.

What are the typical challenges researchers in Switzerland face when managing studies across borders?

Swiss researchers often face complex and fragmented regulatory and ethics requirements when conducting studies in multiple countries. Managing different national timelines, languages, documentation standards, contracts, and CTIS-related processes can be resource-intensive. In addition, coordinating multiple partners and budgets across borders places a significant administrative burden on academic investigators and sponsors.

What specific barriers in multinational studies does ECRIN help overcome?

ECRIN helps overcome regulatory complexity, fragmented study management, and contractual challenges across countries.

It provides harmonised support for ethics and regulatory submissions, project management, monitoring, data management, pharmacovigilance and safety management. By acting as a single coordination partner, ECRIN reduces duplication of effort and administrative overhead for investigators.

Switzerland has been part of ECRIN since 2015. What does this mean in practical terms for Swiss research teams?

ECRIN membership gives Swiss researchers structured and reliable access to CTUs and clinical trial services across ECRIN member countries.

In practice, this means Swiss investigators no longer need to independently identify, contract, and manage foreign trial units for their Horizon Europe call application – as mentioned, these are often complex, time-consuming, and difficult tasks where national bodies do not have sufficient experience.

ECRIN can also act as a gateway for Swiss researchers, involving them in projects developed by colleagues across Europe. Moreover, ECRIN offers other services, tools and training for its community, including a data center certification programme for academic data centers.

With Switzerland fully associated to Horizon Europe again since January 2025 - what new opportunities does this open for clinical research?

Swiss researchers can once again coordinate and fully participate in Horizon Europe projects. Sponsors can now be based in Switzerland, and Swiss institutions can take on formal roles within EU consortia. This significantly expands leadership opportunities and strengthens Switzerland's integration into European clinical research.

In what ways can ECRIN improve the competitiveness and quality of i.e. Horizon Europe proposals?

ECRIN brings extensive experience in designing and implementing multinational clinical trials, which strengthens clinical work packages in Horizon Europe proposals.

With direct links to its 13 ECRIN member states**,** ECRIN provides realistic feasibility assessments, country selection advice, and operational planning. ECRIN has substantial experience in drafting clinical trial components for Grant Agreement applications, including budgets and implementation plans. This results in proposals that are more credible, competitive, and aligned with EU expectations.

What is the role of the European Correspondent (EuCo)?

The role as the EuCo is to act as the primary interface between Swiss researchers, ECRIN and Swiss CTUs.

Beyond advising on access to ECRIN services and supporting proposal preparation, the EuCo also plays a key role in coordinating contract management and service delivery outside Switzerland. This includes liaising with ECRIN and foreign CTUs to ensure contracted services are implemented as planned. Overall, the EuCo uses their overarching expertise to ensure smooth operational and administrative coordination throughout the project lifecycle.

How can the EuCo support Swiss researchers during proposal development?

The EuCo for Switzerland, Christina Huf, is available to advise on study feasibility, country selection, and appropriate CTU involvement.

Together with EuResearch and your local Grants Office, she can also support to find an appropriate call for your proposal. The EuCo for Switzerland supports budgeting, helps align proposals with ECRIN and Horizon requirements, and facilitates early discussions with ECRIN partners. This early guidance helps avoid feasibility or compliance issues later on.

What does the typical process look like when a Swiss investigator contacts ECRIN/the EuCo for the first time?

An investigator can contact the Swiss EuCo at any time with questions.

When they have a research question that requires funding, the process usually begins with an initial discussion to outline the study concept, funding call, and planned countries. Based on this, feasibility is assessed and suitable ECRIN services, participating countries and CTUs are identified as soon possible.

Applications are then submitted to the ECRIN Collaboration Committee. These applications are reviewed during weekly committee meetings, where ECRIN decides whether and how it can support the proposal and subsequent project implementation.

When should Swiss researchers ideally reach out to the EuCo—and what information should they already have at that stage?

Researchers should contact the EuCo as early as possible, ideally during the project concept or call-planning phase.

Having a preliminary study outline, target indication, funding call, and expected countries involved is helpful. Early engagement allows ECRIN support to be optimally integrated into the proposal, plan resources appropriately and support the call application.

How much does ECRIN's support cost?

As an ECRIN member country, the support in the planning phase is offered free to the investigator and sponsor. These costs are covered by the national contribution to ECRIN.

For project management, ECRIN coordination costs must be included in the project budget, typically, within the clinical trial work package. To facilitate this, it is best to include ECRIN directly in the consortium. Costs follow Horizon Europe principles and depend on factors such as trial duration, number of countries, and patient numbers. A rough cost estimate can be provided upon request.

What role do the SCTO and Swiss CTUs play in ECRIN supported studies?

The SCTO acts as the Swiss national ECRIN node, coordinating CTU involvement and aligning national capabilities with European projects. Swiss CTUs provide operational services such as project management, regulatory submissions, monitoring, data management, and statistics.

Together, they ensure high-quality clinical study conduct in Switzerland.

Where can researchers find more information or connect directly with ECRIN and the EuCo?

For general information, call applications, tools, and services, the first point of contact in Switzerland is Christina Huf (c.huf@scto.ch), your local European Correspondent hosted at the SCTO.

In addition, researchers can visit https://www.ecrin.org for general information about ECRIN, and https://www.scto.ch/our-network/ecrin/ for swiss-specific information.

Euresearch also provides complementary support for identifying suitable Horizon Europe calls. They can be reached via their website https://www.euresearch.ch/.